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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000177

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DEPT FOR NEA/ARP AND NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [ECON](#) [MOPS](#) [KTIA](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAITI MINDEF RECEPTIVE TO ADDITIONAL BORDER CROSSING, SALVAGE OPERATIONS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 0295

[B.](#) KUWAIT 0148

Classified By: CDA Misenheimer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[¶](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 12, CDA met with Kuwaiti Minister of Defense Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al Sabah to continue discussions on opening an additional border crossing near Camp Bucca and resuming salvage operations in the Khawr Abdullah waterway. This meeting followed General Petraeus' February 4 conversation with the MinDef (ref B), as well as CDA's February 11 letter to the Minister on the same subjects (see paragraph 6). MinDef was receptive to both initiatives and expressed the GOK's interest in observing and participating in the salvage operations. CDA also briefed on confirmation status of Ambassador-designate and presented a letter from SecDef Gates inviting Kuwait to participate in an infrastructure protection symposium in Bahrain and an air defense conference. Post and ARCENT/MNF-I will prepare an updated presentation for the GOK on the new crossing proposal, facilitate a high-level GOK visit to the border, and continue to press the GOK to resume salvage operations.  
END SUMMARY.

Camp Bucca Crossing

[¶](#)2. (C) On February 12, CDA, accompanied by OMC-K Chief and poloff, met with Kuwaiti Minister of Defense Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah. CDA referred to General Petraeus' February 4 visit to Kuwait (ref B) and reiterated the USG's desire that Kuwait open an additional border crossing in the vicinity of Camp Bucca. Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak noted that the UK had also previously raised this issue, but said he did not understand why the current border crossings were insufficient. CDA reviewed the facts. The Minister was receptive to the idea, but asked that the USG clarify and present its justifications for the new crossing. He also said the GOK Council of Ministers will discuss the issue this week. (Follow up: Post and ARCENT/MFN-I will prepare an updated presentation for the GOK on the new crossing proposal. Post will also arrange air transport for high-level GOK officials to visit the border near Camp Bucca, possibly during early March.)

Khawr Abdullah Waterway

[¶](#)3. (C) CDA asked that the GOK allow maritime salvage operations in the Khawr Abdullah waterway to resume immediately. Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak said the GOK wants to move forward on this issue and intends to observe and

participate in the effort. He commented that the Government of Iraq (GOI) does not accept the UNSC-approved border demarcation (ref A) and said the GOK would not allow unilateral GOI operations in the waterway for fear of setting a precedent in any future border disputes over the Khawr Abdullah. He recalled that the UN Boundary Commission that studied the Khawr Abdullah in the early 90's had failed to complete the task of demarcating the maritime boundary in crucial stretches, and that this work would need to be taken up again at some point in the future. CDA, recalling General Petraeus' presentation of the issue, asked if the GOK, in addition to observing and/or participating, would be willing to fund these efforts, perhaps using some of the USD 575 million Kuwait has earmarked for Iraq development projects. MinDef said this should be "no problem at all." (Follow up: Post will continue to press the GOK to resume salvage operations.)

Ambassador-Designate

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¶4. (C) CDA briefed MinDef on the status of the confirmation process for Ambassador-designate Deborah Jones. The Minister welcomed the prospect of her early arrival and said the GOK will receive her warmly.

Letter from SecDef Gates

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¶5. (C) CDA also presented the MinDef a letter from SecDef Gates inviting the GOK to participate in a maritime infrastructure protection symposium in Bahrain at the end of February and an air and missile defense conference in March. The Minister said the GOK is ready and willing to participate in both events. (Note: We understand USAF Chief of Staff

General Moseley will present Kuwait Air Force Commander Yousef Al-Otaibi with further details on the air and missile defense conference. End note.)

CDA Letter to GOK

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¶6. (C) On February 11, CDA sent a letter to MinDef concerning the request for an additional border crossing and the resumption of maritime salvage operations in the Khawr Abdullah waterway. Text follows.

Begin text:

Your Excellency:

On behalf of the Government of the United States of America and U.S. Embassy Kuwait, I would like to thank you for meeting with General David Petraeus on February 4th. The General and I both found the meeting to be very productive, and we hope to continue cooperating closely with the Government of Kuwait to advance our governments' shared goal of bringing security and stability to Iraq.

In that vein, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some important issues for your attention and further consideration. In his discussions with His Highness the Amir, General Petraeus raised the United States Government's request for a new border crossing in the vicinity of Camp Bucca. This new crossing will greatly facilitate the provisioning of Camp Bucca, which currently houses over 20,000 individuals, by creating a much safer and more effective supply route to the camp.

Furthermore, the U.S. Embassy requests your assistance in allowing the maritime salvage operations in the Khawr Abdullah waterway to resume without further delay. These operations are critical to clearing the waterway of dangerous submerged obstacles and to improving the safety of maritime navigation and commerce. The U.S. Government invites the Government of Kuwait to observe and participate in these operations and hopes that the Government of Kuwait will

consider funding these operations with monies it has allocated for Iraqi reconstruction projects.

The U.S. Embassy very much appreciates your careful consideration of these pressing concerns and looks forward to discussing with you ways in which we can accomplish these mutually beneficial objectives.

End text.

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MISENHEIMER